

NOSTALGIA

Devastating floods, village call for a pub and an unholy row

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MIKE PETTY AND JAMES MILNER LOOK THROUGH THE CAMBRIDGE NEWS ARCHIVES AT SOME OF THE STORIES FROM THIS DAY IN THE PAST

One of the worst disasters in Fenland history - 1970

STEADILY and inexorably the flood advanced and, by dusk, much of what in the morning had been fertile Fen was a mass of grey water gleaming dimly in the fading light.

Houses, bungalows, farm buildings and stacks stood maroon and desolate. Destiny may have chosen 1947 to devastate Fen country with one of the worst disasters in its history. But destiny also chose the man to record it - Mr W. Martin Lane of Ely.

It was a remarkable fulfilment of a childhood premonition that bought Mr Lane to take 1,000 photographs. Examples from a set of 300 pictures in this priceless record of the floods are the centrepiece of an exhibition of local history being staged by Cambridge city libraries in the Guildhall from February 11 to 13.

When a child, Mr Lane was shown tide marks of floods in old Fen houses. He had a premonition that the Fens would flood again and that he would be there to photograph it.

As acres went deep under water, he went into action with his camera to

record a record of the flood in detail that no Fleet Street photographers could hope to emulate.

Mr Lane's pictures, which once raised large sums to help in flood relief, form a centrepiece to a varied exhibition.

It will include sections on local arts - fiction set in Cambridgeshire, poetry and the theatre - tourist Cambridge, trades and industries, Cambridge at war, amateur and professional press, transport and other aspects of local history.

Heacham woman takes refuge from floods on beach house - 1953

STORIES of those who lived through the coastal deluge are being unfolded.

Well-known Cambridge people were amongst those who can now tell of narrow escapes from death.

One woman spent more than five hours on the roof of her beach house at Heacham with the raging sea around.

"Our bungalow was the only one which held together, yet it was washed a quarter of a mile from the original site, and five people living almost next door lost their lives," she said.



Women search for possessions in the remains of a houseboat at Heacham in February, 1953

HULTON/GETTY

Keep up to date with the past

- Read Mike Petty's Cambridgeshire Scrapbook to search for other stories.
- Join Fenland History on Facebook to share your photos and information.
- Follow James Milner on Twitter to receive regular updates each weekend.
- Take a trip down Memory Lane to search for, share and colourise photos.
- Subscribe to Mike Petty's YouTube channel to listen to some of this talks.